



FISTS DOWN UNDER

Newsletter of the Australian / New Zealand chapter of the International Morse Preservation Society

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Recommended FISTS calling frequencies (MHz):

1.808	3.528	7.028
10.118	14.058	18.085
21.058	24.908	28.058

Issue: March 2016

From the editor: ZL2AIM Ian #9683



First of all, I apologise for not putting a huge thanks to Nigel ZL2TX for the great work he did as editor of the newsletter for 12 years. He handed that job over to Chris VK1CT. I am now starting to realise how much time and effort it takes to get from a blank page to the getting it filled up with information that is (hopefully) of interest to you. I guess nobody likes deadlines, but I shall do my best and with some help from the members (that means YOU!) we shall fill the lines with meaningful text. Secondly, thanks to all of you who sent me emails with encouraging comments about our newsletter.

Have you ever wanted to read all the Fists newsletters from UK and USA? The easiest way is to drop a mail to Graham at members@fists.co.uk and he will send you a password for entry to the site. Members of all FISTS chapters have an account on the European FISTS website. The link is <http://fists.co.uk/members>

This will also give you access to the European and Americas KeyNote newsletters. Thanks to Graham G3ZOD

Fists would like to thank the following members for their generous donation included with their subscription.

Denis FO5MD #14153
Andrew VK7AD #14149
Dick Gething, VK3AGQ, #14155
Mike Hutchins, ZL1MH, #9038
Nigel Hardy, ZL2TX, #9040

Always nice to welcome a new member into our ranks. Tony Vickers VK1VIC is member #14192.



Tony has been an amateur radio operator since 1992 but hasn't been active for the whole period. Since discovering SOTA (Summits of the Air) and the VKFF Parks program he has become very active again. Only recently he started to use CW with his first contact being with club member David (VK3FGE). He did learn morse back in the mid 80s when he was a navy signalman but only ever got to 10wpm with the 10inch aldis lamp. Since leaving the

navy he hasn't used morse so is extremely rusty. Tony looks forward to increasing his proficiency with CW both whilst activating as a SOTA Station but also with the club nets. Tony maintains an active blog of his sojourns up mountains which you can see at <https://vk1vic.wordpress.com>

(Not sure about the rest of the members, but I have tried using morse with a lamp and the best I ever got with reading it was at a speed of about 4 wpm! So I take off my hat to you Tony! Hope to meet you on the air soon. Ed)

Recently I have heard some disturbing behaviour in the CW portion of the bands. Perhaps it is time to remind ourselves of the Code of Conduct that was written some years ago but is still relevant for this day and age.



- I will listen, and listen, and then listen again before calling.
- I will only call if I can copy the DX station properly.
- I will not trust the DX cluster and will be sure of the DX station's call sign before calling.
- I will not interfere with the DX station nor anyone calling and will never tune up on the DX frequency or in the QSX slot.
- I will wait for the DX station to end a contact before I call.
- I will always send my full call sign.

- I will call and then listen for a reasonable interval. I will not call continuously.
- I will not transmit when the DX operator calls another call sign, not mine.
- I will not transmit when the DX operator queries a call sign not like mine.
- I will not transmit when the DX station requests geographic areas other than mine.
- When the DX operator calls me, I will not repeat my call sign unless I think he has copied it incorrectly.
- I will be thankful if and when I do make a contact.
- I will respect my fellow hams and conduct myself so as to earn their respect.

I think it is a good idea to read it from time to time to make sure that you are abiding by those same guidelines.

RADIO, MORSE, THE FISTS CLUB AND ME

By Ralph Sutton ZL2AOH #1073



Our editor Ian ZL2AIM asked me to write about the origins of FISTS Down Under. I thought that I would use the draft of a talk I gave recently to the Wellington Amateur

Radio Club in November 2015 as the basis of this article and include my history involving radio in general and Morse in particular.

My long time association with Morse code began when I was about eleven years old, when I joined the local Scout group. We used to signal with a torch or by waving a semaphore flag. (One flag as opposed to two for semaphore.)

In 1938 I went to sea as a deck apprentice at age 15 and signalling by Morse lamp was one of the requirements for qualifying as a Merchant Navy ship's officer. It wasn't long before we were at war and visual signalling became even more vital in convoys and identifying ourselves to shore signal stations. Radio communication from ships became very restricted, principally in cases of distress.

After the war I came to New Zealand as an officer in a ship being delivered to the Union Steam Ship Company. They were a very parsimonious outfit and did not have radio officers on coastal ships apart from those carrying passengers. Radio communication was carried out by the deck officers who were trained at the company's radio school, in a building adjoining the head office on Customhouse Quay. We had to pass an exam in theory not unlike the amateur radio exam, and pass in Morse receiving and sending at twelve words a minute. We also had to qualify in radio telephone operation. So my radio qualification dates back to 1948.

After a few years I was offered a commission in the RNZAF to take charge of their marine craft operations. We had two flying boat bases at Hobsonville, Auckland and Laucala Bay, Suva. After a few years when the flying boats were retired I was moved to administration and IT duties, for which there wasn't any requirement to use Morse. I did retain an interest in radio and was a keen short wave listener. At the same time I had always determined that when I retired I would take up amateur radio.

I retired from full time work in 1990 and with encouragement from Trevor ZL2AKW I refreshed my Morse proficiency that had got a bit rusty in the interim and boned up on the vast changes that had occurred in the technology.

I got my amateur licence in November 1990. I was in the course of changing residence, so held off setting my station up until after I moved to my present QTH in the twelfth floor of a 13 floor apartment block in February 1991. I realised my plans and soon had made many contacts by phone and Morse. However I soon got bored with the phone aspect but really enjoyed talking with a key.

Phil Blakeley ZL2KA was my nearest radio neighbour, in Upland Road, Kelburn. He introduced me to the UK Chapter of FISTS Club that had been set up to encourage the use and retention of Morse at a time when there was strong opposition to the retention of Morse proficiency in the amateur radio licensing regime. I joined and found quite a few fellow FISTS members on the air.

I spent one year living in Japan, 1995-6 managing to operate there for a few months. On my return to ZL, I thought that as there were only about three fists members in either New Zealand or Australia it might be worthwhile developing the club here Down Under.

I received enthusiastic support from the UK and American chapters of the club. With a notice in Break In and distributing leaflets in NZART conference grab bags, FISTS Down Under got underway in June 1998. In the intervening years we have welcomed almost 300 members in ZL and VK and a few "outsiders" in French Polynesia, UK and Japan. Attrition has taken place through age, relocation, change in interest and the grim reaper. However we still have over 160 members from Northland to Southland and from Tasmania to Western Australia. We have persisted with a monthly newsletter, (the

only chapter to do so), we operate a free QSL bureau for our members, participate in the extensive FISTS awards programme and like the various chapters of the club attempt to arrange nets that are open to anyone.

After seventeen years at the helm of FISTS Down Under, I recently decided it was time to hand over the club's administration to someone younger. I had seen the problems that arose when our founder Geo G3ZQX and American coordinator Nancy died without making arrangements for their succession.

Throughout those years I have been principally supported by stalwarts Nigel ZL2TX, Chris VK1CT, Garry VK2GAZ, Derek and a few others who appeared briefly on the scene. I am extremely grateful for their support.

Handing over my FISTS responsibilities has meant that I have more time available to be on the air and to pursue some of my other interests. If you hear "CQ de ZL2AOH" please respond. I enjoy a good Morse chat, mooching along at a slow to moderate speed.

Homebrew Rob ZL1CV #9633



For me, Home brewing radio gear is not whether to build but what to build. Having spent my working life involved in

Engineering and Industrial Processing I tend to want to build things that I missed out on as a young man. I believe it's called reliving your youth, but hopefully with a few less mistakes or at least different ones!



As a 14 year old boy I lived in a small settlement on the coast to the West of Dargaville in the north of New Zealand. After school I used to deliver groceries for the Wairoa Stores in Dargaville (ten shillings a week) and my modus operandi was a 'delivery bike', small front wheel and big basket on the front. This gave me a certain amount of mobility otherwise denied under normal circumstances. This was about 1955 and I learned that the local power board had stocks of war surplus NZ ZC1 transmitter radios which they were installing in their work trucks (very modern??) As I recall, the man in charge of these sets was a man called Mr Dane and he didn't turn a hair when the local grocer boy turned up on his bike and enquired as to the possibility of obtaining some radio parts. Mr Dane took me into the store room and there stacked up on various shelves were many, many, WWII ZC1 radios, all brand new and in their original packing. He, no doubt in his wisdom, knew that a 14 year old boy was not ready for a ZC1 but he did load me up with some of the accessories; (alas such days are gone.) This included remote control units, morse keys, carbon microphones, and earphones and so my junk box was born. Many hours were spent connecting the units together to produce either CW or phone to phone. These goodies were the start of a junk box which has waxed and waned over the years but at present is at a peak? (well my wife hopes so!) A Hikers One was attempted but the filament did not survive the B+ nine volts so another lesson was learned. A later attempt was more successful and I see a 1Q5GT in my valve box so perhaps another Hikers one is a possibility.

At this point I left school and home and took up engineering as an occupation so radio slipped into the back ground and it was many years before I was once again

able to turn my mind to radio. I had in the meantime sat and passed my grade one Ham license and as retirement loomed I was again able to think about home brewing. And so, as in a previous article, I built a Paraset which has given a lot of pleasure and encouraged me to try something else.

With my somewhat limited in-depth knowledge of radio theory I have stuck to CW rigs, and except for one, they are all valve jobs (hollow state?) which consist of parts that I can see and find on the floor if I drop them.

Googling one day I came upon Harry Lythall, SM0VPO's web page, where, among other articles, he had one for a simple two tube xtal controlled CW transmitter so the junk box was duly raided and the necessary parts set aside. A small broadcast radio provided a large number of bits including the power supply. A ham friend came to light with valves, knobs, and a crystal socket. The set consists of a 6AK5 crystal oscillator driving an EL95 or EL84 output tube. I used an EL84 and get about 7 watts of RF output power. The oscillator runs continuously during transmission which helps to give a cleaner cw note. During receive the oscillator is switched off via the antenna relay circuit. At present I am fiddling with a double contact morse key which will key the oscillator just before the final tube is keyed and this will make the antenna change over system simpler. (any excuse to fiddle with things?). Again, this is a rig with 250 volts or so on the plate circuit so 'turn off' is required when working on the set.



The chassis and front panel are aluminium, folded on a home brew bending brake. Where once a chassis punch would have been used to make valve socket holes etc. (expensive!) I now use a step drill which works well in aluminium. The case is made of solid English oak which again came from recycled old bed ends and then finished with Shellac.



The photos show the little 7 watt rig set up with an old Hammarlund HQ-129-X Receiver which still goes very well but don't bang the ops desk as the BFO doesn't like it!





I also prop the lid open a little with my spare pencil to allow the set to run cooler. When transmitting I monitor my sending in a receiver on the other side of the shack. With the RF gain turned back I don't hear the continuous running oscillator but can easily monitor my transmission. (One of the few pluses that I know of for partial hearing loss!)

Postage..... from Chris VK1CT #9057

In case you're not already aware, the Australian postage rate increased on 4 January 2016 from 70 cents to \$1. There were no changes to prices of concession stamps or seasonal greeting stamps, which remain at 60 cents and 65 cents respectively.

Have we lost the plot? The changing face of Amateur Radio
by David Dunn #3756 VK3DBD / G3SCD



The whole purpose of Morse and Vail's efforts was to improve and hasten communications, which at the time were limited to the speed of a man on a horse or where appropriate a message taken, either verbally or written, by the railway train. Together they put much thought into the quickest and simplest way to pass on numbers and letters in a manner that would be accurate and simple. Deciphering someone's bad hand writing,

or far worse, errors formed through repeating a verbal message several times were to be eliminated. (remember the tale of " Send three and sixpence.....") * see footnote if this mystifies you.

Listening to modern Morse code exchanges on the bands lately my impression is that in many cases we seem to be going backwards, at least in the actual field of communications.

If you read on you may well get the impression I am creating list of moans. Not so, I am simply offering food for thought.

As radio amateurs using the code we are in the business of communication; we should be competent at accurately and efficiently passing on a message in a way which takes into consideration the conditions prevailing at the time.

When the band is in poor shape, or the QRM/QRN bad it is sensible and polite to QRS to make sure the op at the other end has maximum chance to copy .

I know of many qsos when the signal is almost lost in the noise and the distant op still sends at 28 wpm or more repeating frequently irrelevant items. Far better and quicker to QRS, send it once and then repeat if requested. There used to be an oft displayed slogan here in VK, I have not seen it for years now. It often hung on a wall in the workplace.

It said

"Do it once, do it well"

a variation of a much older quote I recall which said

"The cost of doing a job properly is always less than having to do it twice"

With respect of course there are some very competent ops and perhaps they are in the majority, but as William Shakespeare remarked -"The evil that men do live after them, the good is oft interred in their bones"-

Take for instant the typical contest station invariably using a PC connected to the transmitter, macros associated with certain keys and The station call is sent out all too often a tad too fast for accurate reading especially when marginal conditions exist, extremely short dots which simply disappear in the background of hash and QRM, the ubiquitous report of 599 (why bother?) is sent as a prrrrdidi along with any other requirement- also generated by a macro and I presume all the op has to physically do is to type in a call, for logging, the pc does the rest, records the time and qso number and ultimately draws up a list of scores. In most cases I guess not a Morse key in sight!

What's more you really need to access the internet/ cluster to see what and where this DX is. The Code hardly enters the equation!

You may gather that this is not my scene at all and on the few occasions I have settled down to give out a few points in a contest, -doing it the traditional way- not with a PC I hasten to add, and after half an hour or less I would become incredibly bored and the mind would wander off to other more interesting and demanding tasks. Not to mention the backache I am inclined to get sitting. I am sure there are many out there who disagree with my thoughts. But each unto his own, that is a choice of the human race.

Contests apart, which I regret to suggest do tend to spoil the bands for many folk who may only have opportunity to be QRV at weekends but I am mainly referring to the apparent lack of real information passed over the air -accurately, by two ops in a normal qso, chatting about their station, family or hobbies. A scenario which to me seems to be getting more and more a rare event these days.

(This is part one of the article that David submitted and I will have part 2 in the next newsletter. Ed)

Ex R/O

Ex Pirate

There have been some interesting posts on the SARL forum regarding QSO numbers for various modes across K5P and VP8STI, with CW outnumbering the other modes by a significant margin :-

K5P Totals CW =43,347 Phone=23,252 RTTY=7,817

VP8STI Totals CW= 34,922 Phone=1,357 RTTY=3,115

.. I'm sure those totals will surprise a lot of people, **CW is absolutely alive and well!**

From Nigel #9040 ZL2TX

Have you forgotten to pay your subs? Do have a look at the list below and see if you are in areas. Thanks.

VK4PG/ZL3GD # 9075,
VK5PH # 9695 ZL2AMM # 9023,
ZL4IX #9644. VK4BCM # 9053,
VK3NAD # 14167, ZL3WD #14147
VK2AFA # 14180 VK2YN # 14148.
VK4BJS # 14178, ZL1AN # 9008,
ZL1BLR #9061, ZL2AUJ # 9668.
VK2GAZ # 14151 VK2RQ # 14154,
VK3CGB # 9087 VK4ARC # 14170,
VK4IL # 14152, ZL2BCO #14181,
ZL2CCO / ZL2AT # 14113,
ZL3GIL # 1410 , ZL3QX #14100,
ZL4IM # 9638 VK2ASB # 9082,
VK3KAA # 14126 VK3KX # 14125,
VK4MDX #14171 ZL1BHQ # 9625,
ZL2BJC # 12 ZL2CJC # 14182
ZL2JJ # 9624 ZL2PAH # 14103
ZL4AQ # 14114 VK1AI # 9604,
VK2CAO # 14127 VK6MX # 14104,
ZL1AIH # 9094 ZL1AOM # 9096,
ZL2APV # 14172 VK2HGQ # 9660,
VK3DBD # 3786 VK3FGE # 9088,
VK3JY # 9630, VK3XU # 9629,
VK4FR # 14157 VK4RC / VK4IZ # 9066,
ZL1ALA # 9628 ZL1RP # 9661

ZL2DF # 9670 ZL3CE # 9099
ZL1AAR # 9028 ZL1CDX # 9048,
ZL2AKW # 9684, ZL2COL # 9663
ZL2IH # 9072, ZL2WT # 9067.

31/03/2016 Subscriptions Due March.
VK3TX # 9664, VK4AAL # 14186, VK4FIIA #
14174, VK4JDR #14185, VK4FJGS # 14160,
VK5BUG 14136, VK6QW 14106, ZL1AYQ #
9602, ZL1BOP # 9631.

Payments of \$16.00 Australian and \$15.00
New Zealand remain the same as last year and
may be paid to Chris Thompson, VK1CT, P.O.
Box 65, Dickson ACT 2602 in the case of
Australia or sent to Nigel Hardy, P.O. Box
15078, OTAKI 5542, NEW ZEALAND, in the
case of New Zealand.

Additionally payments may be made by
Paypal or direct to the BNZ Bank Account
FISTS CLUB - NZ CHAPTER 02-0500- 0753885-
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Regards,
Nigel, ZL2TX

From Garry Cottle VK2GAZ #14151
Thanks to Stan K4UK, I have received a copy
of the latest FISTS Members Archive file and it
has been uploaded to the FDU web site under,
List of FISTS Club members worldwide.
<http://www.fistsdownunder.org/members.htm>

From Nigel #9040 ZL2TX

I have had a good look at the books of FISTS
Down Under and decided that what is needed
is something along the lines of the following:-

1. A committee of at least 4 people, say two in
VK and two in ZL. The committee to decide
subscription rates with a possible reduction
for those who receive the newsletters by e-
mail.

The committee to appoint members to office
in various areas, as decided by themselves
using e-mail.

2. A Secretary (for answering members e-
mails and keeping them informed of events,

advises new members and issues certificates
and membership numbers etc).

3. A Treasurer (to handle all finances of the
club, collecting subscriptions etc. A thought
that crossed my mind was that it may be
better to have subs paid on say the 1st of June
yearly, getting it away from Christmas and the
New Year.)

4. A Co-ordinator (A member who receives all
overseas updates, membership listings,
passing this information to the Editor of the
newsletter.)

5. Newsletter Editor (We have a new Editor -
Ian, ZL1AIM.)

6. A Newsletter Postal Recipient Officer who
prints the newsletter and posts same to
members without e-mail. (At present Nigel,
ZL2TX for N.Z. and Chris, VK1CT but not sure
of the Australian situation i.e. how many
postal recipients or whether Chris intends to
continue with his studies in mind.)

7. Newsletter by e-mail - Sender (We have to
thank Derek Dawkins, VK3KX for sending the
newsletter by e-mail to those who opted e-
mail).

8. Web Administration. (Again we have to
thank Gary Cottle, VK2GAZ for taking on this
task.

Obviously more volunteers are needed to fill
these positions and so I ask all of you to think
about the situation seriously.

Ralph over the years did most of the above
gradually growing the club from three people
to what is today.

I consider that it is too big for one or two
people to handle and so I ask you all to
discuss the club and its future with each other
and offer to help.

An alternative suggestion is maybe it is time
to separate the club into two entities i.e. FISTS
AUSTRALIA and FISTS NEW ZEALAND each
with their own Committee and Officers.

Finally, I would like to congratulate Ian on his
first newsletter as FISTS Down Under Editor.

Nigel Hardy, ZL2TX. #9040

Finally, the editor is ALWAYS looking for
articles of interest to our members. Without
that input, we wouldn't have a newsletter!
Ian ZL2AIM